

# CHAPTER [ 2 ]



## PART 2

### Emerging Capabilities

## Expeditionary Warships

Amphibious warfare ships are the centerpiece of the Navy/Marine Corps' forcible-entry and Seabasing capability and have played essential roles in the Global War on Terrorism. These ships are equipped with aviation- and surface-assault capabilities, which, coupled with their inherent survival and self-defense systems, support a broad range of mission requirements. They provide the most formidable expeditionary forcible-entry capability in the world, the development and maintenance of which is the statutory responsibility of the Marine Corps, under U.S. Code Title X.

The Marine Corps' forcible entry requirement is based on the Strategic Planning Guidance, directing us to "... consider capability alternatives...to support a single two Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) forcible entry operation." Therefore, the Marine Corps operational requirement is two MEB Assault Echelons (AE) of forcible-entry capability. The need to support two MEB AEs in forcible-entry operations drives the requirement to maintain 30 operationally available amphibious warfare ships of these 30 ships, 10 must be aviation-capable large-deck ships (LHA/LHD/LHA(R)) to accommodate the MEB's Aviation Combat Element (ACE).

In early 2007, there are 11 large-deck ships (seven *Wasp*-class LHDs and four



*Tarawa*-class LHAs) in service. Congress has directed the current construction of an eighth *Wasp*-class multi-purpose amphibious assault ship (LHD 8), the USS *Makin Island*, which will be delivered in FY 2008. LHD 8 will be similar to LHD 1 through LHD 7 but will be powered by gas turbine engines and have all-electric auxiliaries.